



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 10
1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900
Seattle, Washington 98101-3140

OFFICE OF THE
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR

Raymond Wassillie
President
Newhalen Tribal Council
P.O. Box 207
Newhalen, Alaska 99606

Dear Mr. Wassillie:

I appreciate your writing to me about recent correspondence the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has received regarding the proposed Pebble Mine. To date we have received several letters from native villages, commercial fishing organizations, private individuals and others requesting that the EPA use its authority under Section 404(c) of the Clean Water Act to prevent the opening of the proposed mine. As you noted we received a letter from the Bristol Bay Native Corporation requesting that we limit the use of our authority to state lands where the proposed mine is located. We have also received letters, like yours, from those who support proceeding through the federal and state permit processes before we would initiate a Section 404(c) action. We are interested in hearing all perspectives on this and all issues.

As you probably know, EPA has been a leader among federal agencies in collaborating with native villages throughout Alaska. EPA understands the economic limitations that exist in remote parts of Alaska and has dedicated considerable resources to alleviating the environmental disadvantages that often accompanies isolation from the infrastructure and economic engines of the State. Our visit to Dillingham was intended to hear directly from those who might be affected by mining. It is unfortunate that you and others felt discouraged from attending and telling us about your interests. Please be assured that in all actions EPA intends to take we will fulfill our obligation for government to government consultation with all native villages that might be affected by our actions.

Currently, we are gathering and reviewing initial information to make a determination whether exploration of the issue through a 404(c) process is in fact warranted. We have not made a decision at this time, however, we want to reassure you that any decision will be based on the best available science and look at modern mining practices. EPA Region 10, including Alaska, has considerable expertise in reviewing and permitting large mines.

Please feel free to send us anything that might inform our deliberation. We are interested in receiving any information that think might be helpful. Please feel free to call me or my staff with information or to discuss this issue further. Richard Parkin is the Acting Director of the Office of Ecosystem, Tribal and Public Affairs. His office is responsible for implementing Section 404(c) of the Clean Water Act. His phone number is (206) 553-8574. Patty McGrath is our Regional Mining Coordinator. You can discuss our policies regarding mining with her. Her phone number is (206) 553-0979. And Phil North is our ecologist for the Bristol Bay area. He is our expert on salmon and aquatic resources. He is located at the Kenai River Center in Soldotna, Alaska. His phone number is (907) 714-2483. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Dennis J. McLerran
Regional Administrator